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A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED

"HOUSEHOLD WORDS"

No. 249. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 1873.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

YOUNG MR. NIGHTINGALE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "HOBSON'S CHOICE," &c.

CHAPTER XXIX. MY PROFESSIONAL STUDIES.

DAYS passed, and weeks and months; still, according to old Vickery, Mr. Monck was always "particularly engaged and couldn't be disturbed." I had never seen him. It was certainly strange. Solicitors could not always, I thought, keep aloof from their article clerks, and remain invisible in this way. And I was much perplexed in writing to my mother—a duty I punctually accomplished every week—how to answer her repeated inquiries concerning Mr. Monck, his treatment of me, and the degree of intimacy and friendship subsisting between us. Old Vickery tried to make me believe that there was nothing unusual in the case; but of this I could scarcely be convinced, new as I was to London and its ways, to the law and its enigmas. And sometimes I fancied that Vickery was himself embarrassed by the matter; wearied of sustaining a mystery that must sooner or later be dispelled.

I had entered no other room in the house except the office. Beyond Vickery and the office boy, whose name it seemed was Scoons, I had seen only a faded old woman, clothed with a sort of brown-holland cover, as though she had been an article of furniture. She usually wore a black bonnet, and appeared armed with a battered dust-pan and a stunted broom, though I could never discover that she plied those implements very effectively in the office. Her name, I gathered, was Cuppidge, or something like it. She was of a timid, humble nature, and whenever I chanced to meet her in the passage seemed seriously disconcerted, seized with a difficulty of breathing

as she flattened herself painfully against the wall with an absurd anxiety to make room for me to pass—the space being always amply sufficient for that purpose, for I was of spare proportions. Or she would dart away and precipitate herself down the kitchen stairs like a scared rabbit making for its burrow. I said "good morning," or "good evening" to her, sometimes, but beyond a convulsive gasp I obtained no response from her. I had never seen her face very distinctly, for it was always obscured by her bonnet.

Yet that there were other dwellers in the house I could not doubt. Surveyed from the outside, though it looked dingy and neglected and woebegone enough, it wore nevertheless an inhabited air. There were faded curtains and soiled blinds at all the windows. Once I even thought I saw a shadowy face at one of the cloudy panes. But it was withdrawn before I could quite assure myself that it had ever been present. And as I sat at my desk I could hear footsteps on the stairs, and movements, the opening and shutting of doors, in the upper rooms. Moreover, but this was not often, visitors entered by the street door who did not approach the office, but were speedily lost in other parts of the building. Now and then I amused myself with thinking that I was the tenant, during business hours, of a haunted house; and memories of youthful adventures at the Dark Tower beguiled my toils as a copying clerk; for that and nothing more I really was for the present, though I enjoyed the courtesy title of article pupil.

It was clear to me, too, that Vickery was a privileged person, and was entitled to enter portions of the house to which I could claim no admission. He often left the office with papers in his hand, as though to obtain advice or instructions from some

superior authority. If I was now and then tempted to think that Mr. Monck, my master, was a non-existent person, I was constrained to abandon this idea when I found that letters were frequently issued bearing a signature similar to that attached to the missives received by my uncle at the Down Farm, when first there had been question as to my adopting the law as a profession. That Mr. Monck was somewhere in the house could not be doubted therefore. Yet to all callers who inquired concerning him, Vickery had but one answer, Mr. Monck was particularly engaged, &c., followed by the suggestion that he, Vickery, was Mr. Monck's manager, and perhaps might do as well.

And then it was soon plain to me that the writer whose admirable penmanship Vickery had held up to me as an example for imitation was also resident in the house. Vickery would quit the office with draft documents to be copied; after awhile he would again retire, to return with the papers fairly written out in the same neat, regular, well-proportioned hand. Who could this writer be? I ventured upon inquiries, but I could extract no information on the subject from Vickery, and the boy Scoons, I found, knew no more than I did.

I wrote home no word of complaint; yet I found my life most monotonously dreary. I knew no one in London, excepting only Vickery and Scoons, for I could hardly count Mrs. Cuppidge and my landlady among my acquaintances. My duties in Mr. Monck's office were simple drudgery. I found my lodgings dull and depressing. Blackstone was less interesting than I had expected him to be. I borrowed novels from a circulating library in Holborn; I sketched a little in an idle way; and I often went at half-price to the theatre. Otherwise I had few amusements, and I felt the lack of companionship considerably. Often I longed, in my dreary solitude, for the society even of Reube, or Kem, or old Truckle. I had always led rather a solitary life, but now I seemed almost desolate.

I was not invariably, however, chained throughout the day to my desk in Mr. Monck's office. Sometimes, as part of my legal education I suppose, I was taken by Vickery to "the Lane," as he called it, meaning that of Chancery, and its precincts. He exhibited to me, much bewildered the while, the various offices connected with equity and common law proceedings. They seemed to me as so many temporary coverts in which hunted clients found refuge and breathing time as they

were chased and driven about by the bounds of the law. They were never safe for long, but still they were afforded a measure of rest and hope until renewed efforts were made for their dislodgment and further pursuit. In the end, of course, they were driven to bay, and rent in pieces, or else securely trapped by ruin in a jail. "It's a great thing to know the offices, Mr. Nightingale," Vickery stated; "it's really practical learning. I've got them all at my fingers' ends. It's more than every man in the profession can say. Once know the offices, and you know a good deal of law, practical law, Mr. Nightingale. Precisely. That's my experience." So I was shown offices where writs were sealed, where appearances were entered, where affidavits were sworn, where deeds were enrolled, where bills were taxed; Record offices, Masters' offices, Register offices, Accountant-Generals' offices, Lunacy Commissioners' offices, Great Seal offices, Patent offices—a most amazing catalogue. Then I was initiated into the mysteries of Judges' Chambers, a dingy row of dwarfed buildings in Rolls Gardens. Here there was a wild babel of noise from a congregation of lawyers' clerks shouting out the names of the firms they represented, or of the case they appeared in, or of the attorneys representing the other side, so that the matter in dispute might be adjusted between them with or without reference to the judge sitting in an inner room. "Time to plead" seemed to be the main object, so far as I could ascertain, of these uproarious wrangling meetings.

"You'll feel a little timid, perhaps, at first going before a judge at chambers, Mr. Nightingale," said Vickery. "I know I did—a good many years ago now—I was a mere boy at the time. But you'll soon get over that. I did. The judge is no more to me now than an old woman at an apple stall." And, indeed, I perceived that the judge moved little awe in the minds of the lawyers' clerks; who seemed a self-confident, loud-speaking, sharp, and rather uncourteous class. Perhaps it was because his lordship was bereft of his wig and robes. The door of his room opening, I viewed him with much interest. He was the first judge I had ever seen. He was not impressive-looking—a little withered old man, rubbing a trembling hand over and over a very bald crown. He seemed quite worn out with fatigue, and spoke with undignified querulousness. "Further time!" he said to one applicant, "you can't go

on like this, you know. There. I'll give you three days;" and he scrawled an order on the back of the summons. To another he said, "No, I can't hear you. It's no use. You must go to the court." And he said it in a most maledictory way, as though he were bidding him go to a much more remote place.

"The Pleas, the Exchequer, the King's Bench," said Vickery, as he introduced me to the various courts, and explained, or tried to explain, the difference between sitting at Nisi Prius and in Banco. He told me the names of the judges and of the leading counsel; and he met many fellow managing-clerks, as I surmised, with whom he enjoyed prolonged converse, exchanging pinches of snuff and legal jokes that I could not follow. He often mentioned me to them as "our new article young gentleman."

Further, he showed me the Courts of Equity. I was duly moved by the appearance of the Lord Chancellor, fronted by his gilded mace and the square embroidered bag reputed to contain that mysterious instrument the Great Seal. He sat silent and still with down-turned eyes. I think he was asleep—there was much slumber in the Court of Chancery in those days—while a learned counsel, with a mountainous pile of documents before him, prosed and droned through an interminable address, the significance of which I could not master for a moment. The Master of the Rolls was also exhibited to me, and the Vice-Chancellor of England. These wigged and robed dignitaries struck me as looking all very much alike, with something of an owl's expression of comatose sapience in all their faces. They sat on their raised judgment seats very still and patient, not much interested in the matters brought before them, yet not wearied or repelled by them either, but submissive and long-suffering, and in no sort of hurry to be relieved of their duties. They all took snuff, and used double glasses when reading or writing was required of them. They rarely interrupted the counsel addressing them. They seemed to me all profoundly convinced that the Court of Chancery was almost of divine origin, that the suitors were made for it far more than it for the suitors, and that any attempt to quicken its proceedings was to be considered and reprobated as something in the nature of a crime.

I was sometimes, but rarely, left alone in the office. On such occasions I found it advisable to continue my copying work less assiduously. I yawned and stretched my-

self, and drew caricatures upon my blotting-pad. I pried about somewhat, reading the notices upon the walls—one of them I remember set forth the circuit of the judges, but it was of old date—and peering into such books as I could find. They were, for the most part, guides to the practice of the courts, with the forms requisite under certain procedures. And I looked into an old Peerage.

Now the only nobleman I had any sort of acquaintance with was Lord Overbury. So I turned to his name. I found him described as the fifth baron; Marmaduke Augustus Frederick Oglethorpe. It was strange, I thought, that he should bear the same christian name as myself, Marmaduke. I did not know it before. Nor was I aware that his lordship's family name was Oglethorpe. The dates of his birth and of his succession to the title were also recorded; the peerage was said to have been created at the coronation of King George the Second.

I read also, greatly to my amazement, of his lordship's marriage, some sixteen years back, with Lady Jane Wilhelmina Caroline Pomfret, daughter of the sixth Earl of Bannerville, whose marriage with Edward Gustavus, second Baron Wycherley, had been dissolved by Act of Parliament. Married! Then there had been a Lady Overbury before Rosetta.

Further I was pursuing my investigations when the office bell rang. I touched the spring communicating with the outer door, and presently a stranger entered the office.

He glanced in the direction of the desk usually occupied by Vickery; appeared surprised, then turned towards me. But he said nothing. I quitted my high stool and advanced towards him.

"Mr. Vickery's out at this moment, if you want him." Then pursuing the form usual under the circumstances, I said: "Mr. Monck's engaged, and is not likely to be disengaged very immediately. Is it anything I can do for you?"

The stranger laughed. "Engaged, is he? I know all about that. And Vickery out? And you're young Mr. Nightingale, I suppose, the new article clerk?"

I said that was my name. Thereupon he laughed again.

CHAPTER XXX. I SERVE A WRIT.

THERE was not much to laugh at that I could see. Yet the stranger's laugh was not aggressive or unpleasant, but rather, as it seemed to me, the irrepressible result of

a natural cheeriness and geniality of disposition. He was a young gentleman of about my own age, with bright, twinkling, blue eyes, and a delicately mobile mouth, that seemed readily tickled into a mirthful form. His whole face, which was smooth and lightly tinted, and not to be described as handsome so much as pretty, wore a femininely sensitive and impressionable look. He was smartly dressed in a blue coat and close-fitting lavender trousers, strapped under his shiny sharp-pointed boots; he carried an ebony cane, silver-topped, and decked with swinging silken tassels. Removing his glossy hat for a moment, he passed his thin fingers through his wavy flaxen hair, arranging it in clusters on either side of his face. In my own mind I accounted him quite what we then called a "buck." He had a smart London air about him, which I had not yet been able to acquire. Indeed, by the side of him I felt that I was more than ever a "yokel." And I was constrained and diffident in his jaunty self-satisfied presence. Not that I could find fault with him, or wish him changed. His manner was perfectly natural, and his little airs and graces seemed to suit him as completely as his dapper clothes fitted him. Indeed I felt myself attracted to him, his smile and glance were so winning, and his dainty prettiness of aspect and manner was altogether so admirable.

"Will you be seated?" I proffered him our hard wooden office chair.

"No, thank you, Mr. Nightingale. I'll not stay. This place makes me melancholy. It always did. I hope it doesn't affect you in the same way. But I sat at your desk once—I was a clerk here, studying law, as you are now studying it." Here he laughed. I blushed, for I felt that my so-called legal studies had something ridiculous about them. "But I really couldn't stand it. The law and this office were quite too much for me, to say nothing of old Vickery. Then I'm a flighty sort of person, you know. I felt like a bird in a cage." It seemed to me that this was a fair description of him. He was as a sprightly bird of gay plumage; the office must have been a dreadful cage to him. "So I and the law parted company," he continued. "But I'm detaining you. You're time's precious, I dare say, Mr. Nightingale."

I could not help regarding this rather as a joke. "You know my name, it seems," I said.

"Oh yes, I've heard of you. I hope you

find yourself comfortable here, and may like your profession better than I did. No, I won't stay, thank you. Good morning, Mr. Nightingale."

He was going; but he paused with his hand upon the lock of the door.

"I don't know that it matters much," he said. "But as I know your name, Mr. Nightingale, you may care to know mine. My name is Wray, Anthony Wray, but I am generally called Tony. People seem to think it suits me better, and I don't object. I dare say they're right. Tony Wray. Perhaps we may meet again some day."

"I'll tell Mr. Vickery that you called, Mr. Wray."

"Oh, just as you like about that. It doesn't really matter, you know. Good-bye."

A wave of his white handkerchief, wafting towards me a scent of lavender, and he was gone.

He did not quit the house though. The outer door did not close behind him. I listened. I could hear his light nimble step as he mounted the stairs. I hesitated. But I decided that it was no business of mine; that I was clearly not entitled to interfere. Probably Mr. Wray was privileged to enter the mysterious upper regions of the house. Otherwise he would surely not have gone there. I heard a door on the first floor close behind him. It was all right enough, there could be no question.

I resumed my study of the Peerage. But what remained was of inferior interest. I read, however, that the family motto of Lord Overbury was "*Virtute et fide*," which did not strike me as particularly appropriate; that his crest was "a dexter arm couped below the elbow, vested argent, and grasping a club or," which my lack of heraldic learning did not enable me to comprehend very fully; his coat of arms and supporters were also described, and then, by reference to the illustration plate, I was able to identify these armorial bearings with the carvings adorning Overbury Hall. Further I gathered that, in addition to Overbury Hall, his lordship was possessed of Brackley Castle, Cumberland; that the family was of great antiquity, had been enriched by intermarriage with other distinguished houses, and received territorial grants from Henry the Eighth at the dissolution of the monasteries; that a certain Charles Richard Oglethorpe had been sheriff of the county in the ninth year of the reign of James the First; that the Oglethorpes had espoused the cause of the

Stuarts during the great civil war, and thereby incurred much loss of property; that a certain Fletcher Vandaleur Oglethorpe had been bred to the bar in Queen Anne's time, and been appointed a judge of the Queen's Bench; with much more detailed information of the same kind. The book, however, was not of recent date. It did not set forth, therefore, the death of Lord Overbury's first wife. She must be dead, of course, or how could he have married Rosetta? Nor did it mention whether his lordship had any issue by his first marriage. Moreover, there seemed some doubt as to who was the next heir to the barony.

Old Vickery returned. I thought it becoming to close the Peerage, and to return to my copying work. Old Vickery eyed me suspiciously for a minute or two, and then inquired, "Anything happened in my absence, Mr. Nightingale?" He seemed able to read in my face that something had happened.

"Mr. Wray called—Mr. Anthony Wray. He left no message."

"Precisely. Mr. Wray. He would call. No; he was not likely to leave any message."

"He went up-stairs I think."

"You think, Mr. Nightingale? It doesn't matter much in this case, only, as a rule, never think when you know. Thinking isn't evidence. No doubt he went up-stairs. He would go up-stairs. He was likely to."

"He told me that he had occupied this desk himself, but that he didn't like the law."

"Precisely." Then, after a pause, he added: "You see, Mr. Nightingale, whether he did or did not like the law as a profession is of little concern to anybody but himself. Perhaps the law did not like him, and the separation was by mutual consent." He was silent for some time. Presently he resumed. "Don't, Mr. Nightingale, understand me to be saying anything disrespectful of Mr. Wray. A pleasant young man, I call him. But there never was, and there never will be, the making of a lawyer about him. There may be other things in him—I don't say no—but there isn't that. A pleasant young man, as I said; and, if you must know"—this was scarcely fair; I had certainly not insisted upon knowing; but Vickery liked to affect that information was extorted from him rather than supplied voluntarily—"if you must know, he's Mr. Monck's nephew, and he calls here now and then,

and, not troubling himself to consider whether it's convenient or not, or whether Mr. Monck is or is not particularly engaged, or too much occupied to care to see him or anybody else, he goes up-stairs. I mention the matter lest he should call again at any time and I should happen not to be in the way. For no other reason. As Mr. Monck's nephew, he's at liberty, or considers himself so, to go up-stairs or where he will. You need not take any notice of the fact. Now you know all about Mr. Anthony Wray. That is all. I hope you're getting on nicely with that fair copy on brief paper you've had so long in hand, Mr. Nightingale?"

I said that I was getting on nicely, I thanked him, with a mental reservation that nicely did not mean absolutely the same thing as rapidly, for, as a matter of fact, my progress had not been remarkable.

It was a day or two after this that Vickery took me out with him, leaving the office in the charge of Scoons. We did not, for a wonder, walk in the direction of the offices, but turned towards the western regions of London. Soon we were among the club-houses of Pall-Mall. Vickery seemed to be in no hurry, but I noticed that he looked about him almost anxiously as we advanced. He said little.

We paused at the corner of a street. Vickery leant against a lamp-post and took snuff. His gaze was fixed upon the flight of steps and classic portico of a massive corner building of white stone. It occurred to me that he was taking unwonted interest in the achievements of architecture.

Suddenly he started. A man had issued from the building, and was standing at the top of the flight of steps. He looked up and down, and waited, as though he were in search of his carriage.

"That's my man," said Vickery, quietly, and he produced from his breast-pocket a long narrow slip of parchment, and a corresponding long narrow slip of paper. "Now let me see if you can serve a writ, Mr. Nightingale. This will be practical learning to you. You see that gentleman on the steps? You will go to him. Show him this parchment, hand him this paper, and leave it with him. Mind that. It's very simple. There's nothing to be afraid of. If he asks at whose suit, say Dicker Brothers. Go at once. Do it sharply. I shall be here if there's any difficulty or trouble. But there won't be. You understand?"

I did not much like the errand. But I

could scarcely object to it. Was it not part of my profession? Still I was rather ashamed. I knew that my face was burning, and that my heart was beating with unaccustomed force and rapidity.

I hastened to the gentleman, leaving Vickery in the background inspecting me.

"What is it, my lad?" said the gentleman, as I mounted the steps and stood beside him.

He was tall and thin, dressed in handsome dark-coloured clothes. He was very pale, with aquiline features, heavy straight eyebrows, large deep black eyes, and iron-grey hair.

"If you please, I'm to give you this—a copy of a writ. This is the writ."

In my hurry and confusion I was nearly presenting him with the parchment original and retaining possession of the paper copy.

"A writ, eh?" A light flush of colour appeared in his white face; his brows lowered, and he bit his lower lip as he glanced towards me rather angrily.

"Yes, a writ, if you please. That's the copy, this is the original I hold in my hand."

"What's the amount claimed?"

"It's written on the other side, sir, I think."

"Oh, I see. Seventy-six pounds eight and tenpence. Dicker Brothers. I thought I'd paid it long since. It shall be attended to, young man. Provoking. I'm careless about these things. Where do you come from?"

"From Mr. Monck, solicitor, of Golden-square. The name's on the back of the paper, sir."

"True. Say I'll attend to it. I'm sorry there should have been this trouble about so trumpery a matter. I'll see to it at once, and call or send a cheque. That will do."

I was going, when he laid his hand upon my shoulder, and seemed to turn the light of his large eyes fully, almost fiercely upon me. He stood for a moment looking into my face intently, and yet as though he had forgotten what he purposed to say.

"What's your name, boy?"

I told him. He repeated the name after me in a musing way, as he gently withdrew his hand from my shoulder.

"And you're a process-server? Isn't that rather an ignoble occupation?"

I mentioned that I had never served a writ before.

"I think I wouldn't serve one again, if I were you," he observed.

I explained that I was Mr. Monck's articled clerk, and that I was bound to obey orders.

"His articled clerk? Well, that sounds better than process-server. And you're to be a lawyer? Well, you might be something worse, perhaps. I say, perhaps—I'm not sure, knowing little enough of the subject. It's not a pleasant profession to my thinking, but then I'm not a lawyer."

I waited, for he seemed about to say something more. But after another look at me he simply smiled and nodded in a not unkindly way, and I understood that my task was accomplished. I took the parchment back to Vickery, leaving the gentleman standing on the steps holding in his hand the paper I had left with him.

"What did he say?" Vickery inquired.

"He said he'll attend to it, and call or send a cheque; and he asked my name."

"Ah! he'd better attend to it. He didn't threaten you, did he? In my time I've known of process-servers being assaulted and pretty nigh killed. But I was sure that it wouldn't happen in this case, Mr. Nightingale. I knew whom I had to deal with. These fine club gentlemen are used to writs. They rather like them, I do believe. It's excitement for them. They couldn't get on without excitement. All the better for us. Well, you've learnt something practical to-day, Mr. Nightingale. You now know how to serve a writ, and that's really an important matter. The first step in an action at common law. But for the new Act we should have taken the gentleman to the lock-up straightway. They will keep on reforming the law, spoiling it to my thinking. The law's a very good law, if they'd only leave it alone. You never hear lawyers complaining of it, and of course they're the best judges, knowing more about it than anybody else."

MODERN ROMAN MOSAICS.

A SILENT HOUSE.

WHOSO has visited the Catholic countries of Europe, is acquainted with the aspect of the brown-robed, rope-girdled, bearded Capuchin friar. His is a familiar figure, in busy street and squalid alley, as well as on country roads. He is to be found in the crowded haunts of men, and in remote solitudes where some lonely convent crowns a rocky eminence, or nestles amid woods and gardens. Humble as he is, the Capuchin is a soldier who has done important service to his Church. His poverty and

his ignorance bring him into immediate and familiar contact with the populace. He is a beggar, and patron of beggars. The food which he receives from the hand of charity he divides with the mendicant who is too old, too feeble, or too lazy to work. He may be met with, sometimes driving an ass laden with bags or paniers, sometimes trudging along under the burden of his well-filled sack, over a large portion of earth's surface. And here in Rome, within a stone's throw of my windows, is the head-quarters, the Downing-street, the Admiralty, the Horse Guards, of this brown militia all over the world.

Whether he treads the hot stones of a South American city with his sandaled feet, or climbs the rocky pinnacles of Assisi, cradle of his order; whether he basks under a Spanish sun, or braves the keen blast that sweeps over the "wind-gashed Appenine," it is from yonder huge monastery, with its great walls and few windows, that the Capuchin friar receives commands, instructions, and superior officers; for there dwells the general of the order; a general of division, supreme over his own arm of the service, and owing obedience only to the great commander-in-chief of the whole ecclesiastical army, who sits in the Vatican.

The great mass of convent buildings stretch away behind the Capuchin church, Santa Maria della Concezione, and have behind them a large walled garden, which adjoins the gardens of the Ludovisi Villa, where the King of Italy resides when he is compelled to be in the capital of his kingdom. The church itself has not much either of beauty or interest to recommend it to the curiosity of strangers; but it possesses one or two fine pictures, notably a Saint Michael overcoming Lucifer, by Guido Reni, and being set down in the red book, is duly visited during the season by foreigners from beyond the Alps and seas. One other sight the church has to show—a very strange one. And to that we shall come presently.

It is May. The trees are all leafy and fresh, unscorched, as yet, by July heat. Sellers of lemonade and fresh water have their little booths at every street corner, and the ingeniously piled rows of pale lemons and amber oranges, mingled with goblets, which, though only of cheap glass sparkle as bravely as diamonds in the sunlight, make a very pretty show, and a tempting, to dry and thirsty throats. The white folds of the Roman head-dress flutter on

the heads of the peasant women, for there is a breeze, a delicious, fragrant, vivifying breeze, wafting the smell of hay from the Campagna, and gathering garden odours—rose, and carnation, and acacia-blossom, and a hundred others—as it flies. On the Piazza Barberini, the cabmen have driven their horses into the shade, leaving the wide central space to sunshine and the pleasant spray from Bernini's fountain, where the Triton sends up prismatic showers from his conch shell.

How still and sweet the morning hour appears. In the deep blue sky, a little fleecy cloud seems too lazy to fly further, but has furled his white wings and poised himself to rest on the air, as a swan rests on the water. Up on cornice and jutting fragments of stonework the weeds grow luxuriantly, green, and purple, and brown; and they just sway and bend languidly as the breeze passes over them. A brown cowed figure, with silver-grey head and beard, is slowly ascending the steps of the Church of the Conception. An old blind beggar woman sits on the steps and jingles her tin box with a copper or two in it, by way of asking alms from the passer-by. But she is half asleep in the sunshine, and the coppers scarcely rattle, as she mechanically moves her box to and fro. The whole scene is full of tranquillity. That great blinking monastery seems the very "local habitation" of peace. Let us follow the friar up the steps into the church.

Well, we need not linger here very long. There are the usual tawdry altar ornaments, paper flowers, and gaudy carpets, and pictures of the Madonna with a tinsel crown on her brow, inserted to give greater splendour and dignity to the atrociously painted image. There is Guido's Saint Michael victoriously treading down Lucifer, behind a blue curtain, which is withdrawn, for a trifling fee, by a mild-looking friar. There are two silent old women, and three noisy young ones, who fidget, and rustle, and clatter up and down the church on their high heels, all more or less engaged in performing their devotions. The shabby rush-bottomed chairs stand piled up in a corner on the brick floor. A dim lamp twinkles before a shrine. A black-coated priest, with his shovel hat in his hand, comes in and kneels on the tombstone of Cardinal Barberini in front of the high altar. You may see the whole scene repeated a score of times in a score of Roman churches this May morning.

But follow the friar, who has shown us

the Saint Michael, and who gently asks if we would not like to see their "cimitero"—their burial-place? Certainly! The cemetery of the Cappuccini is one of the well-known sights of Rome.

Perhaps you expect to emerge from the whitewashed passages into the convent garden, where there is shady sleeping ground, under the cypress and stone-pine, for those followers of Saint Francis who will never more be roused by the matin bell in the dark of a winter, or the twilight of a summer, morning. No; you are wrong. Our brothers departed this life do not lie there with the birds chirruping and the weeds blossoming above their graves. They are in a holier, albeit to worldly eyes a drearier, place. Beneath the church is a series of vaulted chambers. They are not underground, because the church itself is, as it were, on the first floor, being approached by a tall flight of steps. These vaulted rooms are low, and are lighted by grated windows looking into a great external court-yard. A livery-stable keeper rents some buildings on the side of the court-yard opposite to the monastery, and a man is grooming a fine horse under the gateway. He does not hiss at his work as an English ostler would do, but rubs his two hard brushes together after passing them over the animal's hide, at regularly recurring intervals. That, and the occasional stamping of the horse's hoof on the flagged pavement, are the only sounds which break the quiet of the place. And these sounds do not disturb the occupants of the vaulted chambers under the Church of the Conception.

For this is a Silent House, and the monks who walked this earth in their brown serge garb two hundred and odd years ago lie and stand in it, and are disposed piecemeal about its walls and roofs, in the form of bleached bones, calm in the invulnerable quietude of death.

All of the brotherhood who die within the convent walls are interred, and disinterred—as will presently appear—in this place. The ground here is formed of soil brought from Jerusalem. In each chamber are three or four narrow and shallow graves, with a black cross at the head of each bearing a ticket with the name of its occupant written on it. Around three sides of the chamber is a kind of grotto-work of human bones and skulls, and the ceiling is decorated with symmetrical arabesque patterns formed in dead men's bones bleached to a yellowish white like old

ivory. The fourth wall of the chamber is undecorated, and has a window in it. When a friar dies, he is put—coffinless, and unprotected in any way from the action of the soil—into one of the graves, and allowed to remain there during four or five years. The body is then removed, and is found to have become mummified. There is no corruption or decay. The quality of the earth acts as a preservative, and dries the poor soul-sheath into a strange weird semblance of living humanity. The dead monk is placed by his brethren in one of the niches left for this purpose in the grotto-work. He wears his brown frock and rope girdle, now crumbling into snuff-coloured dust, and clasps a wooden crucifix in his withered livid hands. Some of the figures are propped up in a standing posture. Others recline, half sitting. The cowl is drawn over the yellow heads. On some the hair and beard remain. On others the skin is bare and shrivelled as a parchment buried ages ago in some forgotten tomb. And on these documents there has been writing; strange hieroglyphics; soul histories graven in cunning lines upon the sentient flesh. What is it you would tell us, you withered sybilline leaves of humanity? Something you might reveal, some word you might utter of precept or warning, some cry of sorrow, some tone of sympathy, could we but decipher the half-effaced lines upon your silent faces. But they are dumb to us as inscriptions on an Etruscan monument. We have not the key. We cannot read them.

There are strange and grotesque varieties of expression on these charnel-house physiognomies. One man reclines with up-turned face and parted jaws, which show two rows of strong even teeth, and looks as though he were opening his mouth to appeal to, or argue with, some unseen being. Another—an aged man this, who died one hundred and fourteen years ago, with a reputation for sanctity—has his head, to which a few white hairs still adhere, hanging on one side, and the eyes closed as if weighed down by slumber. Sleep on, brother! Fortune turns her swift, thundering wheel—revolutions rush through the streets of Rome from gate to gate—pontiffs and princes fret and strut their hour upon the stage—but you heed them not! You hear them not as you slumber, and slowly, atom by atom, return to your native dust in the Silent House! Yonder is a figure which strikes horror as we gaze. The monk is standing. He holds his

crucifix in a claw-like, lead-coloured hand. His head is partly turned aside, and on the face, overshadowed by the cowl, is a strange derisive sneer. He seems in the act of turning from us to conceal this ghastly smile, which mocks at death and life. But we see it. It haunts us. We avert our eyes, and look at a sonnet which is written on parchment, and hung up hard by the skull of a venerable man who departed this life in the last century. The sonnet is addressed to "Il Superbo," the proud man, and admonishes him to reflect on his littleness, his helplessness, and his mortality, in presence of the memorials around him, that we are all but dust and ashes. We read the sonnets carefully through. But all the time we are conscious that the Mephistophelian monk is sneering under his cowl. Our gaze returns, fascinated, to his fleshless face, bent down and turned away from the outstretched hand which holds the crucifix, and smiling with the cynical despair of all good things, which is more tragic than tears. Ugh! It is cold here, is it not?

Our guide—the gentle friar with a pale, vellum-coloured face, and ample, soft, brown beard—smiles tranquilly. "We are all buried here," he says, lightly touching a thigh-bone with the back of his forefinger. "All of us who die in the convent are buried here. At least, we used to be. But now the Italian Government has forbidden interments within the walls. You understand Italian well. You have read the sonnet? Yes? Ah! you are looking at that one. He died—let me see, there is the ticket—yes, he died seventy-four years ago. But he is not so well preserved as this other, who has been dead a hundred and fourteen years! Think of it! A hundred and fourteen years! And there is the hair, and even the eyelashes, still remaining!"

The gentle friar is evidently very proud of this specimen. He opens the door, pursued by the malignant and demoniac sneer of the cowed mocker. As the shadow flickers across his figure with the opening of the door, one could almost swear that the evil smile deepens, and that the fleshless hand which holds the crucifix moves, stealthily threatening. Our guide bows humbly, and smiles with childlike gratitude as we put a very modest fee into his hand. Farewell, good padre. God have you in his keeping! Make haste up there to the convent garden where the sky looks face to face upon the earth we must

return to, and where little birds are piping in their nests, and flowers are growing and living after the law of their being. It is better, warmer, up there in the sunlight, than down among your departed brethren holding ghostly council together in the Silent House!

NEWS OF THE PAST.

TURNING over a collection of eighteenth-century newspapers not long since, we lighted upon a volume, dated 1736, bearing the attractive title, *The London Spy Revived*, by Democritus Secundus, of the Fleet. This oddly-named journal, "printed for the benefit of the author," and "sold by those persons that carry the newspapers," bears, of course, small resemblance to a London newspaper of the present day. There are no leading articles—readers interested in politics were supposed to be able to think for themselves. There are no law reports, no police reports, no literary reviews, no theatrical criticisms, no parliamentary reports, and even advertisements are few and far between. Still, with all these subtractions, it was no light task for one man to fill the columns of such a paper as the *London Spy*, published thrice a week. Why the industrious author should conceal his personality under an alias, is a puzzle, for despite the suggestive name, and its association with the disreputable Fleet, there is nothing in the *London Spy* of which an honest man need have been ashamed. Perhaps Democritus Secundus was over-modest, yet, if he had been, he would scarcely have assumed a *nom de plume* worn, with a difference certainly, by Melancholy's great anatomist. Since he did not scruple to filch his good name from Burton, we wonder he did not borrow a little more from him, and, as mottoes were in vogue, take,

No centaurs here, or gorgons, look to find;
My subject is of men and human kind.
Whate'er men do; vows, fears, in ire, in sport,
Joys, wand'rings, are the sum of my report.

Or, if he preferred prose to rhyme, Democritus Junior could give him: "I hear new news every day; and those ordinary rumours of wars, plagues, fires, inundations, thefts, murders, massacres, meteors, comets, spectrums, prodigies, apparitions, of towns taken, cities besieged, daily musters and preparations, battles fought, shipwrecks, piracies, and sea fights, peace, leagues, stratagems, and fresh alarms—a vast confusion of vows, wishes, actions,

edicts, petitions, lawsuits, pleas, proclamations, complaints, grievances, are daily brought to our ears;" for, truly, our London Spy speaks all such matters with a most commendable brevity.

London in 1736 seems to have been a happy hunting ground for thieves of every degree. We read of a gentleman and his two servants being stopped, near Brompton, by a pair of highwaymen, who, after robbing them, made off across Chelsea Common; of three gentlemen, taking the air near Norwood, having to deliver their purses, watches, and silver spurs to another pair, who bade their victims "Good night" in a very genteel manner. Hounslow Heath, Cambridge Heath, Battersea Fields, were scoured by well-mounted rogues, apt to cry, "Stand and deliver!" and five such toll-takers "kept the roads" about Hampstead and Highgate. Upon the 17th of November the Spy records: "Last Tuesday morning, between six and seven, Turpin the butcher, one of Gregory's gang, in company with another, both well mounted on bright bay horses, were seen to ride through Wandsworth, and are supposed to be the two highwaymen that have lately infested the roads in that neighbourhood." Turpin, attired in a brown coat and red waistcoat, was afterwards seen drinking at an inn in Clapham; but no attempt was made to arrest him, and this ruffian of ruffians, elevated into a popular hero on the score of a feat of rapid riding he never performed, did not meet his deserts until three years afterwards.

While its approaches were thus robber-ridden, London itself was an unsafe place to travel in. No one could walk from Pancras Church to Kentish Town, from Knightsbridge to Kensington, along the Oxford road, or cross the great field between Poplar and Stepney, without running the risk of being knocked on the head by footpads, ready to commit murder for the sake of a few shillings' worth of plunder. London Bridge, Tower Hill, and Bunhill Fields, were especially to be avoided after dark for like reasons. An oilman, venturing to take a walk with a friend about eleven o'clock one night, in the fields at the corner of Brick-lane, leading to Old-street, was set upon by six footpads in vizard masks, and eased of a silver watch, a moidore, five shillings, and a bunch of keys. His companion took to his heels, but did not escape without injury, receiving one cut on the head, and another upon

the shoulder, from a cutlass, ere he got clear of his pursuers. A man and woman returning home from Tottenham Court fair, were waylaid, robbed, stripped, tied together, and flung into a ditch in the Long Field. An officer of the Guards was attacked in Cavendish-square. The wife of the Duke of Chandos's porter, going from the duke's mansion in the same square to Mr. Fox's house, a few doors off, was stopped on her way; and a hackney-coach was robbed in Shoreditch while the watchmen were passing by it. No wonder the citizens' hearts rejoiced when twenty-six new lamps were set up in St. Paul's Churchyard, in hopes of lessening the number of night robberies there.

A few hours spent in a police-court will suffice to teach one that it is better to be heavy-handed than light-fingered; but although the law is still open to the reproach of considering the person of less account than the purse, things are not quite so bad, in this respect, as they were a hundred and forty-six years ago; when, at Hull, Charles Cadogan and his wife, charged with murdering their maid-servant, were found guilty of manslaughter, and "accordingly they were burnt in the hand;" while, at Winchester, Thomas Barton, was sentenced to death for cutting the hop-tops in a garden at Waltham. A convict, who took the liberty of returning from transportation, was effectually prevented from repeating the offence by being hung at Gloucester; "after he was turned off, several persons, having wens on their necks, made application to the sheriff to receive the stroking of the dying man's hands, with the agonised sweats thereon," which request was readily granted, and the permission as readily acted upon, the patients departing happy in the belief that as the dead man's hands mouldered in the grave, so would their wens shrink and shrink, till they disappeared altogether. The story of a double execution at Bristol has a yet stranger sequel. Two men, Vernham and Harding, were hung on St. Michael's Hill. After the bodies were cut down, that of Vernham was seen to turn on being put in its coffin, whereupon it was seized by some lightermen, who carried it away, and sent for a surgeon. He opened a vein, and Vernham sat up, rubbed his knees, shook hands with his friends, and spoke to them. The under-sheriff resolved to re-arrest the dead-alive in order that the sentence of the law should be carried out; but he

was spared the trouble, by the man dying the same night in great agony, and we are told, "it is uncertain whether any secret method was used to despatch him." Meanwhile Harding, too, had come to life again and been removed to the Bridewell, where the people flocked to see him as he lay in his coffin, covered with a rug, breathing freely, but unable to speak, "only motioning with his hands where his pain was." More fortunate than his fellow, Harding recovered in time, and received a pardon.

The Whitstable magistrates cooled a quarrel between a clergyman and a doctor, by making them pass a couple of hours together in the stocks as a punishment for swearing at each other. We doubt if Mr. King got off so lightly when he was tried at Warwick assizes for cursing the king, and drinking the health of his Majesty James the Third. A soldier of the second regiment of Foot Guards received two hundred lashes on the parade in St. James's Park, as a prelude to being drummed out, with a halter round his neck, for stealing a warming-pan. One Friday morning a woman and a man were whipped from the jail in Southwark to the bridge foot, "the usual distance for that discipline;" and at the same time a servant, who had robbed her master, was flogged from the prison to the end of the stones by her master's door. An "eminent attorney," dwelling in Southwark, did private penance in St. George's Church for slandering a woman keeping a chandler's shop in the Mint; and a young woman did public penance in Greenwich Church, by standing, arrayed in a white sheet, in the church porch, from the time the bell began ringing, until the commencement of divine service; and in the middle aisle until service was over. One Joseph Gillam was pilloried in Bishopsgate-street, for defrauding a doctor's daughter of a box of clothes; "the mob pressed to give him the usual reception, but were artfully diverted by some of his friends, who drew them off by a stratagem, and played them one against another until his time was up, so that he came off unhurt." No one seems to have interfered with the amusements of the "roughs" of the last century. When "Parliament Jack" was hung at Tyburn, the mob took possession of his body, and exhibited it at Westminster to all comers willing to pay a penny for the sight, to obtain enough money to bury their hero decently. A

gentleman put an end to the show by paying for a coffin and shroud, and then the dead highwayman was borne in triumph to the New Chapel churchyard, and there interred, apparently without any ceremony. When, for some mysterious reason, the mob dragged the corpse of a Quaker lady out of the church in which it had just been deposited, and hauled it through the streets, until her servants came to the rescue, and battled successfully for their mistress's remains, the perpetrators of this scandalous outrage went off scot-free. Such a thing would be impossible now-a-days, as impossible as for a gentleman of fortune, nearly seventy years of age, to marry a sixteen-year old shoemaker's daughter at the Fleet; or for a girl to be drowned in a Southwark pond in attempting to pluck some wild flowers growing by the pond side.

We have said that advertisements are rare in the columns of our old newspaper; we can only find three worth noting. In one, Jarvis Carr, of Spitalfields, notifies all whom it may concern, that whereas his wife Jane has refused to leave her mother, and live with him, her husband; he will receive her kindly if she comes, but if she does not, will not be answerable for any debts she may contract. The second runs thus: "October 1st, 1736. This is to give notice to all persons who have pledged any goods at the Greyhound and Hare, and the Three Golden Balls, in Houndsditch, to fetch them away, on or before the 20th of November, or they will be disposed of—the pawnbroker being determined to retire into the country on account of his health." The third, dated the 19th of August, is: "This day is published, price ninepence, The True Way of Evading the Act, humbly inscribed to all Distillers and Vendors of Spirituous Liquors." The Act in question was a bit of grandmotherly legislation worth recalling to mind. At the beginning of the year a petition was presented to parliament averring that the excessive use of gin had destroyed the lives of thousands of the king's subjects, and rendered many others unfit for any useful service by driving them into all manner of vice and wickedness. This was referred to a committee of the House of Commons, who found that the excessive consumption of the obnoxious liquor was due to its low price. A bill was at once brought in, laying a duty of twenty shillings a gallon upon all spirituous liquors, and compelling all retailers to take out an annual license,

costing fifty pounds. Pulteney led the opposition to this attempt to enforce sobriety by Act of Parliament, declaring he had never heard of laws forbidding people to partake of certain kinds of food and drink, but the Act passed by a large majority. It came in force on the 29th of September, and the advent of compulsory temperance was hailed with tumult and rioting. The London Spy tells us that the sellers of punch, not having taken out licenses, put their bowls and signs into mourning. "Mother Gin lay in state at a distiller's shop, near St. James's Church; but to prevent the ill-consequences from such a funeral, a neighbouring justice took the undertaker, his men, and all the mourners into custody." Although no gin was to be had, the gin-shops were open for the sale of various substitutes, and the dram-drinkers found it easy enough to get drunk upon Sangree, Tow-row, Parliament-gin, the Last Shift, the Baulk, the Ladies' Delight, or cider boiled with Jamaica peppers. Near St. James's Market, red drams were to be bought in bottles, labelled, "Take two or three spoonfuls four or five times a day, or as often as the fit takes you;" and the apothecaries' shops drove a brisk trade in "colic waters." Many of these evaders of the law were heavily fined, but it was dangerous to inform against them, for the mob showed no mercy to an informer when they caught him. Democritus Secundus advises the distillers to conform to the Act, and refuse to sell less than two gallons of spirits to a customer, but adds: "Observe well that a contract is a sale; and if a customer cannot afford to pay for two gallons at once, you can sell for part money and part credit; and the buyer can take away with him just so much as he has occasion for—the buyer and seller agreeing as to how the goods be delivered and payment made." The Gin Act lasted just half a dozen years; as its opponents prophesied an immense injury had been done the revenue, while, instead of drunkenness declining, it had increased year by year. Few, if any, efforts were made to put the law in force against those who chose to violate it; informers dared not, magistrates would not stir in the matter, and when, in 1742, it was proposed to reduce the duty on spirits, and fix the license duty at one-fiftieth of its previous amount, a bill to that effect passed the Commons "almost without the formality of a debate."

Here is a contribution to the history of English pantomime: "October 6th.—Last

Sunday morning, Mr. James Todd, who represented the Miller's Man on Friday night last, in the entertainment of Doctor Faustus, at the theatre in Covent Garden, and fell in one of the flying machines from the very top of the stage, by the breaking of the wires, by which accident his skull was fractured, died in a miserable manner. Susan Warwick, who represented the Miller's Wife, lies at the point of death at the infirmary at Hyde Park Corner." And here is a bit of news from Dublin concerning a certain famous dean: "August 7th.—Last Tuesday the Society of Woolcombers walked in procession through the principal streets of the town. They made a beautiful appearance, being every one dressed in a handsome tie-wig, made of the whitest wool; with sashes hanging over their right shoulders of fine-combed wool, coloured blue, purple, red, and white." Where was the patriotic green? "They made a particular procession to the house of the Reverend Doctor Swift, D.S.P.D., and desired they might have the honour of seeing that glorious and worthy patriot of his country. As soon as he appeared they cried out, 'Long live the Drapier,' and 'Prosperity to Ireland.' After many huzzas, they passed in review before the dean, two and two, making the profoundest reverence to him as they marched by, which the dean was pleased to return."

From Dublin, too, comes a tragical story of a dream. Mrs. Ward, the wife of a shoemaker there, paying a visit to an old acquaintance, arrived just in time to see her laid out, and assist an old woman in that melancholy office. She was proceeding to undress the head of her dead friend, when the woman stopped her, saying that had already been done. Mrs. Ward stayed for the funeral and then went home. That night she dreamed the dead woman came to her and said, "Why did you not open my head? I was murdered by my husband!" Awaking in affright she told her dream to her husband, who advised her to go to sleep again. The next night she again saw her friend in her sleep, but this time the latter spoke to worse purpose, saying, "Since you did not open my head, you must come with me!" and gave Mrs. Ward's arm such a twist that she awoke screaming with the pain, and continued screaming until three in the morning, when she died. Upon her wrist was the print of a finger and thumb! The body of the buried woman was taken up, and, on examination, dis-

closed a bruise upon the back of the head, beside several others upon the shoulders; but as it was held these might have been caused by the jolting of the corpse against the coffin on its way to the grave, the inquiry ended in nothing.

In April a sea-monster was seen at Bermudas; the upper part of the creature's body in size and shape resembled that of a boy of twelve, the lower part was like that of a fish, and its hair was long and black. Taking the alarm, he made for the water, pursued by several men, who "intended to strike at him with a fishgig; but, approaching him, the human likeness surprised them into compassion, so that they had no power to do it," and so lost the chance of making a very interesting capture, and convincing the sceptical that the merman is not a fabulous animal. Some among us would as readily believe in the existence of a man-fish as in that of a centenarian. Democritus Secundus was not their way of thinking, for he tells us that on the 17th of September Mrs. Elizabeth Shewer, aged eighty-five, the relict of an eminent pinmaker in Deptford, was interred at St. Mary Magdalen, Bermondsey, being followed to her grave by her mother, then near upon a hundred and five. Again, he chronicles the burial, in St. Pancras Churchyard, of Mrs. Ditcher, who died, at her lodgings in Tottenham Court-road, at the age of a hundred and six. "She was used to all manner of hard work, as washing and charring, from fifteen years of age, and never was ill or out of order till within a few days of her death."

Our editor or author occasionally treated his readers with a little rhyme, lightening his columns with the Five Reasons for Drinking:

If on my theme I rightly think,
There are five reasons why men drink;
Good wine, a friend, because I'm dry,
Or lest I should be by-and-bye,
Or any other reason why.

And the One Reason for not Drinking:

There's but one reason I can think
Why people ever cease to drink;
Sobriety the cause is not,
Nor fear of being deem'd a sot,
But if good liquor can't be got.

A triumvirate of quacks—Mistress Mapp, the bone-setter; Taylor, the oculist; and Ward, whose remedy Chesterfield was willing to take himself, although he recommended others to leave it alone—are celebrated in a parody upon Milton:

Three famous empiricks, in one country born,
Epsom, Pall Mall, and Suffolk-street adorn.

Mapp makes the lame to walk by manual sleight;
Taylor alike restores the blind to sight:
The stone, the gout, and every human ill,
Ward cures eternally by drop and pill.
Ye quacks in medicine prescribe no more;
Without it, these, as sure as death, can cure.

There is nothing else in the shape of verse worth quoting, except it be the following from "a letter put in the post-house."

To William Callway, now at Lyme,
Let this be sent in proper time.
You at the George, in Lyme, may leave it
Where he in person may receive it.
To make the case more plain and clear,
Take notice—Lyme's in Dorsetshire.

THE EVIL EYE.

I.

BRIGHT scarlet pomegranates and fragrant, softly-tinted roses cling round a wooden verandah, and above them are vines and star-blossomed myrtles, breathing sweetness into the soft evening air. Overhead the sky is cloudless, with purple and green tints rarely seen in northern countries, and, besides these tokens, there is a more human indication of southern climate.

A middle-aged woman sits under the verandah, and beside her a girl stands speaking.

Both women have southern faces, clear olive skins, and lustrous dark eyes; both are handsome, but the girl is beautiful. So far, that is, as shape, and features, and skin can beautify, Thérèse Nouailles is beautiful; but, as she stands speaking to her mother, she looks imperious, and fretful too, and there is a fierce, resolute will in her splendid dark eyes.

Her mother had been like Thérèse years ago, but now she is fat and bulky, and her eyes are rather wily than fierce. She wears a gown of pale straw colour, but her head and shoulders are wrapped in a brilliant Indian shawl, in which black and scarlet are the predominant colours. She looks like a handsome sibyl as she peers through the shawl at her daughter's face.

"I tell thee, my mother, I hate delay. At Véron there is a rich home waiting for me, and I long to see it. Ah, my mother, remember that I have been poor all my life; it is a glorious feeling to think that I shall never want money again."

The mother's eyes glisten, there is a keen look on her face, which argues some sympathy with this love of money, and yet she resents her daughter's words.

"Take care, Thérèse. The dog throw away substance, thou knowest, in snatching at a shadow. Thou art married to a rich man, and he loves thee, and he is gentle

and easily persuaded. He will stay here in Chardès if thou wilt it. His property is funded; his presence is not needed at Véron. Be guided, my child. Stay here, it is, indeed, better."

The mother's voice grows imploring. At first a selfish wish to keep her rich son-in-law and his money at Chardès moved her; but, as she speaks, the picture of her daughter's dull life alone with this quiet old man is realised by her fervid fancy.

"Stay here," she repeats, "among thy old companions, and near thy father and me."

"Merci, ma mère. No. I have decided. I must see my husband's home. If I stay here I am only Thérèse married instead of Thérèse single; but at Véron," she curves her graceful neck, and her eyes shine out with the coming triumph she pictures, "I shall be Madame Dupont, wife of the richest landowner, except the seigneur himself. What do I know? It is possible that when the ladies at the château see me they will be only too glad to welcome me, and to admit me to their intimacy."

Madame Nouailles shakes her head.

"That might be possible here, in the south, Thérèse, where our claims and old descent are known; but the northerners are a cold-blooded, insensible people, and thy beauty even will not break down the stiff barriers set between classes up there."

"Monsieur Dupont is not cold-blooded."

The young beauty laughs and blushes; her courtship has been very short, and her husband dotes on her.

"No." The mother pauses an instant. "Monsieur Dupont is all that can be desired in a husband, or I should not have presented him to thee, Thérèse. Monsieur Dupont stays here happy and contented, and, although he is so much older, he stands by cheerfully, and sees thee dance and amuse thyself with thy old companions; but at Véron all this will be changed. Here Monsieur Dupont considers that I am still beside thee, and that all that I permit is to be permitted; but far away at Véron he will be thy sole guardian; and my Thérèse loves pleasure dearly, and it is possible that, at his age, Monsieur Dupont may not care for the gaiety which is to thee so necessary."

Thérèse turns away pouting, but, as her mother ends, a confident smile chases the pout from the girl's lovely lips.

"My mother, if I were to bid Monsieur Dupont stand on his head, he would try to obey me." Her mother laughs, and Thérèse

flushes with quick anger. "I say this in praise of my husband. He is everything I wish."

She moves away to the end of the long low house, and stands looking at the exquisite sky; at least her great passionate eyes are lifted to it, but her thoughts are all of earth.

"And can my mother think that I have married so old a man, given up all chance of a young and handsome husband, to stay contentedly under her wing at Chardès? No, I must have something more than this for my sacrifice." She begins to pace up and down. "My mother says that at Véron no one will know anything about me. Well, they soon shall know something about Madame Dupont. I will stop in Paris on our way, and see whether I like the bonnets and dresses there better than my own. My husband says that jewellery would spoil my beauty, but I think seeing is believing. If he is so rich it is better to decorate me than to hoard. Yes, I have decided. I will not stay another week in Chardès."

She gives a little stamp by way of seal to her purpose, then, as she turns abruptly, she meets her mother face to face.

Madame Nouailles has crept up silently. She puts her hands on her daughter's shoulders. The girl is startled by the unusual action. She looks inquiringly.

She sees a fresh remonstrance in her mother's imploring eyes and parted lips, but at the sight her will seems to be of iron strength.

"My mother, I have decided," she says, quietly. "Within a week I and my husband must leave Chardès."

"Ah, no!" There is a sob in the woman's voice, and her shoulders rise and fall with suppressed agitation. "I conjure thee, my child, not to be rash, not to tempt fate; I cannot tell why I so shrink from thy departure. It is not only the thought of losing thee. It may be because I detest the north and its cold formal ways. But I have one reason, that may weigh even with thee, my wilful Thérèse. I do not like that thou shouldst go to a house where already there is a mistress." Thérèse's black brows knit in a fierce frown. "I say I do not like this Mère Mangin of whom thy husband speaks with so much praise."

Thérèse bends down and kisses her mother. "Be at ease, my mother." She gives a cheerful smile. "La Mère Mangin is an ugly old woman, and if she does not please me, why I shall send her away. Ah, here is Monsieur Dupont."

A tall thin man comes from underneath the verandah, and advances towards them.

Madame Nouailles shudders, and then crosses herself.

"I should not fear so much," she whispers, "if he had not said that the people of Véron say his housekeeper has the evil eye."

II.

LA MERE MANGIN is a tall dark woman, with long narrow black eyes, and an ever-changing play of countenance. The children of Véron call her a witch, and their mothers say that she has the evil eye, but this is only whispered, for no one prospers who is on unfriendly terms with her.

Look at her standing in her master's garden. She is, indeed, very like a witch. Her brown cotton gown clings close about her legs, and on the top of her white cap, which has scarcely any frills to speak of, is a coarse brown straw hat with a high crown. She wears a blue and yellow neckerchief, strained across her chest, and tied behind her back, and her folded arms rest upon a black stuff apron. Her face is so wrinkled that you are surprised to see her suddenly turn round and go tripping towards the house like a young girl; perhaps the movement can scarcely be described as tripping; it is quieter, more cat-like.

She pauses when she reaches the low-browed entrance. The house itself is a large, square, gloomy-looking place; inside the long narrow passage the flag-stones are green with damp, and tell how little life goes on within the old stone walls.

She pulls a letter out of her pocket, and begins to read it through again. By the time she has reached the end she is frowning heavily.

"Yes, yes," she says to herself, "my master, Monsieur Dupont, is excellent, but the best of men have their faults; he is good and gentle, but he is also weak and obstinate; he loved his wife, that poor pink and white, meek Josephine. Yes, he had for her a passion that is not to be believed, and when she died in the first year of her marriage, he was so obstinate he would not take comfort. He shut himself up, he shut up the house from light and air, till it has become more like a prison than a house. Ciel! I do not know how it will ever recover it; and now what has happened?—six months ago he departs, without consulting me, and now he is to bring home a wife. Well, we shall see who will be mistress. I am too old for change."

She has left off scowling, but her smile has something far more fearful than her frown.

III.

THE wind is rising fast; clouds, at first gauzy, but lately thickening in texture, scud more and more rapidly across the sky to join a leaden, humid mass of vapour that seems to be spreading upwards from the horizon.

There is still some light on the river, but it looks cold and ghastly to Monsieur Dupont's young bride, as she catches a glimpse of it through the weird, white-limbed birch-trees that border the road.

She has been so impatient to reach her new home that she refused to sleep on the road, and she is very tired with the long wearisome journey.

They have left the diligence at the last market town, and have been jolting along the stony road in an old-fashioned vehicle, with a hood for the passengers, and a small seat perched up in front for the driver.

Thérèse shivers and draws her head again within the hood.

"Monsieur Dupont," she says, in a fretful voice, "how much longer is it along this dismal road?"

No answer comes, and she bends over to the corner where her husband sits, and touches his shoulder with her hand.

A loud snore—a start—and then—

"Ah, oui, Margot, fais comme tu voudras," follows the snore.

Thérèse leans back in her corner with a look of disgust.

"Foolish old man," she says; and then she smiles, "poor old dear, I am hard-hearted; the journey has been too much for his politeness. I wish I could go to sleep too."

But she cannot sleep, her mind is restless, and the fatigue from which she suffers has fevered her. She wishes she had consented to sleep at the last town they stopped at; then she should have escaped this lonely journey, and should have reached her home in bright morning light.

There is a sudden jolt. Monsieur Dupont starts awake this time, and looks round him with staring eyes; as these reach his wife he recovers consciousness.

"We shall be at home very soon now, mon amie, and then Margot shall take care of thee."

He puts out his hand and takes hers, but Thérèse shivers and draws herself away. At that moment her mother's warning

assumes a new shape; for the first time she hears in it truth and likelihood. And then her fierce will rises against her fear.

"I am tired and overdone," she thinks. "I have always ruled every one, and I will rule this Margot also."

Her husband has wrapped a shawl round her since he woke, and either the warmth or her complete exhaustion lulls Thérèse into a short sleep. She does not rouse till the vehicle stops.

She is so tired that she does not at first realise where she is. She leans forward and looks out.

It is almost dark, but she sees a large dark house standing a little way back from the road. At the open door is a tall woman, shading the light of a lamp with her hand. As she sees Monsieur Dupont the woman runs up and shakes hands with him.

"A la bonne heure notre maître," she says. "Why, you have flown here. I did not look for you till to-morrow. However, as you know, it is not easy to find Margot unprepared; you will find all ready but a fire, and if you need one that is soon kindled; here, Louison, come and carry in the baggage. Is the little mistress in the carriage?"

"Yes, yes." And Monsieur Dupont turns back to help his wife down the awkward steps. But Thérèse has scrambled down by herself, and she stands waiting for her husband, very erect, and with a tempest of pride in her face.

"You had better tell your servant that I am Madame Dupont," she says, very coldly, and so slowly that it seems as if she had measured the space between her words.

Monsieur Dupont is sensitive, and he shrinks into himself at the changed tone.

"I hardly consider Marguerite an ordinary servant," he says, gently; "but I came to fetch you that I might present you to her." He tries to take his wife's hand, but she sweeps past him up to where Margot stands, lamp in hand.

Instinctively the woman raises the light, and as it falls on the advancing figure it falls also on Margot's face.

She leans slightly forward; there is an eager gleam in the long dark eyes, but the lips are pressed tightly together, and the thick dark eyebrows meet in an intense frown.

There is malice and strength in Margot's face, and for an instant Thérèse falters in her purpose. Her mother's warning comes back; she feels chilled and fearful; but she

hears her husband's footsteps coming fast up the walk.

She makes a slight bow as she reaches Margot.

"You are the housekeeper, I suppose. Go on first, and show the way to whatever room you have prepared for me."

She does not look at her—and she would not read much on the tutored face; Margot turns a little pale, and her thin lips smile, but she goes on first, and opens the door of a small room.

She goes in, lights two old-fashioned sconces on each side of the fireplace, and then departs, closing the door behind her.

Thérèse looks round and starts, then gives a little cry, crosses herself, and flies to the door which Margot has closed on her.

The candles in the sconces shed only a feeble light on the dark walls, but facing her are two skeletons, and on the table below there is a large skull.

IV.

At the end of Monsieur Dupont's garden furthest from the house there was a thickly planted grove of sycamore-trees, beyond this was a gate leading into a field, and on the right of this gate through the trees you could see another gate set in the ivy-covered fence that bordered that side of the garden.

Margot stood by this smaller gate, basket in hand, for within the fence lay the kitchen-garden—her treasury not only for herbs, but also for the curious plants out of which she brewed the decoctions which had made her famous in Véron.

Monsieur had practised surgery in his youth, and had also given medical advice, and Margot had studied his books to some purpose, and probably was the best doctor of the two.

There was a scowl on her face as she went into the kitchen-garden.

"Monsieur bids me make a tisane for madame, and when I answer she will not drink it, he has looked at me more sternly than he ever did before. I hate her."

She begins to gather dandelion leaves, snapping them off with a sharp nip of her bony thumb and finger, as if she wants to hurt some one, and is forced to give vent to the feeling on that which comes nearest. "I will not bear much more"—the words drop from her lips in broken sentences. "I thought Félix Dupont, for his own sake, would have taught her how to behave; she has neither tact nor temper, and she is a fool." Margot smiles at the last word in an unpleasant manner, and then her quick

ears catch the sound of voices among the sycamore-trees; she crouches down near a hole in the fence and listens.

"No, my sweet friend"—it is Monsieur Dupont's voice, and it sounds vexed—"I am sorry to refuse thee—it is harder than thou knowest."

"Then why give yourself the pain?" Thérèse speaks scornfully.

"Because I love thee really, my child, and I would keep our life together free from clouds."

"At least, then, I ought to have a reason given me. I only ask that all our friends and neighbours, who have seemed so glad to see me, may come and dance in my honour; it is not much to ask, and why am I refused?"

Margot laughs to herself as she crouches under the hedge.

"Tiens! she has a rare temper, but Félix Dupont must be doting indeed if he submits to a tone like that." She listens eagerly for her master's answer, but he waits before he gives it.

When he speaks his voice is full of pain. "Thérèse, do not make me call thee wilful. I told thee at Chardes that I lived a quiet, dull life; that at Véron we are quiet, dull people. Every now and then, from time to time, we ask a few of our neighbours to dine with us, according to the custom of Véron, and thou shalt do this, my child; but a fête, such as that thou desirest, would raise the tongue of gossip against us, and would lessen our friends instead of increasing them; and besides—hush, till I have ended—since we have been married we have had too much gaiety. I want thee more to myself, my dear little friend; if we love one another, our own society should be all-sufficient."

It seems to the listener that Madame Dupont struggles away from her husband.

"Oh that I had stayed at Chardes," the girl sobs, passionately. "I have never lived a dull life, and I will not; if you had a quarter of the love for me which you pretend to have, you would not make me so unhappy; but you do not love me. Sooner than displease that hateful housekeeper, you will break my heart. Either she shall go or I will."

There is a sound of swift footsteps hurrying away, and then silence.

Margot rises, creeps softly to the gate, and looks through it. Monsieur Dupont stands under the trees very still and quiet, his face hidden between his hands.

"Bon! she has shown her hand. She

shall go, not I," the housekeeper says, between her teeth, as she hides again behind a tall row of scarlet-runners.

When she comes again to the gate, Monsieur Dupont is out of sight.

Margot goes in-doors. She is anxious to see how the young mistress bears defeat; but Thérèse is not in either of the downstairs rooms, and presently, when the housekeeper makes an excuse to go to madame's bedroom, she finds the door locked.

Madame Dupont kept her door locked till noon the next day, then she came into the eating-room and rang for coffee.

Hitherto Margot had refrained from remonstrance. She foiled Madame Dupont's haughty airs by an apparent unconsciousness that any offence was meant, and this reticence had been part stratagem, part love for her master, and desire to spare him pain.

To-day she brought in the coffee herself; and she saw with satisfaction the pale cheeks and heavy eyes of her master's wife. It seemed to her that her time to speak had come.

"Madame has not slept well," she said, with a keen look through her half-closed eyelids.

No answer except a haughty movement of the graceful neck.

"Monsieur has not slept either." Margot drew near, and put her hand on the young lady's chair. "Ah, madame, it makes me sad to see my master unhappy."

Thérèse's first impulse was to bid the woman leave her, but she checked this; there was a new sound in Margot's voice, and the girl's heart beat fast in vague terror. The dread that had seized her on that first night had been lulled by the housekeeper's indifference; but now the old fear was coming back. She dared not look up; "the evil eye" might even now be blighting her. Margot's appeal had startled her—the woman was impertinent and interfering, but she was plainly moved by love for her master, and secretly Thérèse felt ashamed of her own treatment of her gentle, loving husband.

Margot was surprised at her silence.

"The bird is tamed so soon, is it?" She closed her eyes on this thought, and stood weighing the possibility of governing Thérèse instead of getting rid of her.

"I will go and tell monsieur," she said, "that madame wishes to see him."

"You will do no such thing; you had better mind your own business, or you may

get into trouble. All you have to do is to take care of the house, and see that it goes as it should do. You can leave me; I prefer to be alone."

Thérèse spoke haughtily, but she did not look at the housekeeper. Margot bent over the high-backed chair till her face almost touched Madame Dupont.

"Good counsel should always be welcome. Madame is very young, and she does not perhaps remember that the chief duty of a wife is submission. Monsieur is more unhappy than I have ever seen him since the death of madame, and he did well to regret her—she never gave any one an unkind word. She consulted me in everything."

"Then she was a fool——"

Thérèse's anger mastered her fear, and she pushed back her chair impatiently. It struck the housekeeper a sharp blow as she still bent over it.

Margot whitened till she looked like a dead woman, and Thérèse trembled as she glanced at her face.

"She was what you will never be—she was an angel. She made others happy, you live only for your own pleasure; her death was blessed, yours will be a curse."

Margot had kept calm outwardly, but the blow, which she believed was intentional, had made her furious, her words came without her control.

Thérèse's indignation conquered all discretion. She stepped forward and gave the insolent servant a box on the ear.

"Go away, do you hear me. Insolent!" she stamped her foot. "I do not wish ever to see you again. You can tell Monsieur Dupont I have discharged you."

Margot stood drawn up to her full height, colourless except for a faint streak on the cheek which Thérèse had struck.

"I will tell your master and mine what you say," she said, her voice full of contempt.

Thérèse looked up quickly, a flush of shame had spread over her face, but when she met Margot's eyes, she blanched at once, and caught at the chair to save herself from falling. It seemed to the unhappy girl that through those half-closed, dark eyes an evil spirit was looking at her, smiling in malignant triumph. Before she recovered herself, Margot had departed.

V.

It is late evening, and the wind is cold and searching; it blows pitilessly through the sycamore-trees, and sends with each blast a fresh tribute of leaves into the dark

water that lies in the field beyond the gate. The water eddies and trembles as if it, too, shrinks from the chill blast. Monsieur Dupont, hurrying home across the field, shakes his head at the accumulation of leaves and broken twigs on the water.

"It must be cleansed to-morrow," he says, "or the fish will be choked."

And then, as he opens the gate, and passes into the garden, Monsieur Dupont sighs, and wonders whether his wife's temper will be changed.

Margot has told her story, and he is angry as well as grieved with his wife. He has only seen Thérèse for a few minutes, for she insists on Margot's instant dismissal. As he walks slowly to the house, so full of discord now, the memory of his sweet, loving Joséphine comes back, and he sighs still more heavily.

"She loved Margot," he says, trying to nerve himself into resolution, "and Margot is a good and valuable woman. I cannot have her ill-treated."

Monsieur is patient and good, but his wife's conduct is out of the pale of his experience, and her resolute avoidance of him during these last days has broken the spell of his infatuation.

"I was happier alone with Margot," he murmurs, as he goes slowly and heavily into the house.

He finds Thérèse pacing up and down the large bare dining-room. She stops when she sees her husband, but she does not speak or smile.

Monsieur Dupont walks up to her.

"My wife," he says, very gravely, "Christian people cannot live as thou and I have been living these last three days, and I love thee too well to suffer thee to commit injustice without repairing it. I will never permit Marguerite to be impertinent, but I cannot discharge so good a servant. I must ask thee to apologise for the blow thou hast struck her. I am quite sure thou dost repent it."

Thérèse's eyes flash such brilliant scorn that the poor man cowers.

"Then you choose between me and her. I have said I will not live with her, and I will keep my word."

Monsieur Dupont shakes his head.

"Thérèse, thou hast made me frightened as well as sad; such a temper is a curse. It is not Margot, it is thyself thou must learn to rule."

She gives him a passionate glance, and hurries away to her room.

"I must write to her," he thought; "she will not listen to my words."

That night the wind rose to storm fury; it burst into the houses through windows, hurled huge slates off the old roofs, and brought many a tree crashing down into the river. But Thérèse did not hear it. She paced her lonely room up and down till twilight faded into darkness, and even then she went on pacing up and down. There came a sudden tap at the door, and she started with a scream of terror.

"C'est moi, madame." The twang of Louison's voice soothed Thérèse's fear; she went to the door and opened it. A sudden shrinking from her loneliness made her glad even to see Louison. The girl had a lamp in one hand and a letter in the other. She held the letter to Madame Dupont.

"But madame has no light." She peered over the young lady's shoulder into the dark room.

"Give me your lamp," Thérèse said. She longed to ask Louison to stay with her, but the girl turned away when she had set the lamp on the table.

Thérèse seated herself and looked at the letter. It was from her husband.

"Folly," she said, angrily. "A sermon, I suppose."

At the first few words her eyes softened, and her bosom heaved, Monsieur Dupont assured his wife so tenderly that his only wish was to make her happy; but as he went on in praise of Margot's good qualities, the dark eyebrows knitted, and the fierceness came back. The letter ended with these words: "It is better to submit to a little that we do not like, than to lose so good a housekeeper. I cannot turn away so old and attached a servant even for thee; and besides this I make it a special request that thou wilt apologise for the blow. After this there will be peace."

Thérèse started up and flung the letter on the floor.

"Selfish old fool! I see it now. He cares for his peace and his untroubled life more than anything—much, much more than he cares for me. Well, he shall have it. I will go away, and leave him to find out what it is to lose me. Yes, I will go——" She stopped and put both hands to her temples; they seemed to be swelling with the dizzy tumult within her brain. Where should she go? Not to Chardes, where she had thought to make a triumphant return. She could not go there as a fugitive. Where could she go?

She shivered and leaned against the wall of her room. She could not go into that great cold outside world alone. Would

it not be better to stay here? But the tiny whisper was silenced instantly.

"No, no—never!" She stood erect again, her eyes flashing, her hands clenched. "I cannot stay unless I beg pardon of that woman. Ah, she is no woman—she is a fiend!—her eyes—her eyes!" she covered her face with quivering fingers. "And he—he is determined, or he would not write in that cold manner; he would come himself and entreat me to be friends. Friends!" she laughed scornfully. "I begin to hate the old wretch, and if I did stay here, to live shut up alone with him would be hell—hell! Well, there is one fiend here already"—her eyes grew wilder, and she talked aloud in her excitement. "Yes, she has the evil eye; I felt it scorch my brain. And she has said my death shall be a curse. No, the curse be on him who brought me here—lured me under the same roof with this fiend; my curse on her, too! Ah, my mother, if I had but listened to thee, if I had but stayed in Chardes; but that is idle now, I am doomed—if I stay I can only wither slowly under this fire, it is in my heart and in my brain; if I fly it will follow me, for she is no woman, and her terrible eye—ah, what do I know, even now it is destroying me!"

She flung herself on the floor.

La Mère Mangin rose early. She was always up and dressed before her lazy help arrived, for Louison did not sleep in the house. This morning, to her surprise, she found the door leading into the garden open.

"Did I forget to lock it, then, last night?" she said, with a puzzled face.

Louison was late. The fire was lit and the kitchen swept before her sabots came clattering down the stone passage.

Margot turned round with a reprimand on her thin lips, but the sight of Louison's face stayed her tongue. The girl looked clay-colour, and she dropped into a chair as if she had received a blow.

"There is a ghost, Mère Mangin—a ghost who walks amongst the trees li-bas," and she points to the garden. "Pierrot has seen it while he was looking for mushrooms—a ghost with long black hair and all in white."

La mère grows pale, and her narrow eyes shrink into a line.

"Hold thy peace, simpleton; do not let the master hear of such folly. Here, mind the coffee-pot an instant."

For a sudden thought, almost a fear, has come to Margot, and she hurries up to

the room of Madame Dupont. She opens the door gently. She is surprised to find it unlocked.

The room is empty, the bed has not been slept in, but the clothes which Madame Dupont wore yesterday lie in a heap on the floor.

Margot takes this in at a glance, and then she goes to find Monsieur Dupont.

"Have you seen madame?"

His face answers her, and she hurries on to the garden. She searches every corner, and then with slow, unwilling steps she goes to the silent pool beneath the trees. It is covered with fallen leaves, and one or two large boughs have been wrenched off by the wind, and stretch their twisted arms as if they were snakes writhing on the water.

Margot stands peering down into the water as if she thought she could see to the bottom.

Her arm is roughly seized.

"What do you here, wasting time?" Monsieur Dupont says hoarsely. "You have driven her away—find her, I tell you, find her at once."

Margot only shakes her head and points to the pool, and the wind means sadly among the trees.

They seek her at Chardes, for at first Monsieur Dupont will only believe that she has sought refuge among her own people, but Thérèse is not there, and her parents cry shame on the grey-haired husband who has failed to make their daughter happy. They search the neighbourhood of Véron, and at last in sheer weariness, Monsieur Dupont permits the pool to be searched, but Thérèse is never found.

Some of the old folks of Véron shake their heads, and say there are deep holes in the pond, and that Margot knows of them, and that till the missing wife is found the house of Félix Dupont will be haunted. And, it is whispered, that in every September in gusty weather, just when the dawn brings a ghastly light over the damp dismal house, a tall white woman with long black hair glides through the garden and disappears among the sycamores.

La Mère Mangin has never seen the ghost, and no one would dare to tell her of it, but she is avoided more than ever. She rules supremely now in the old house, but she looks aged and anxious, and there is in her eyes the same seeking, expectant expression which you see in her master's.

Félix Dupont is always seeking his lost Thérèse. As he goes through Véron the children point at the withered, bent old man, and cry out:

"There goes the old Dupont looking for his witch-wife."

And as he goes, the poor broken man murmurs:

"My poor unhappy child—my lost Thérèse—shall I ever find thee?"

NO ALTERNATIVE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "DENIS DONNE," &c.

CHAPTER X. WELL MET!

HARTY left all hope behind her when she witnessed that recognition. The man who was bound up by his union with her mother, with her fate, was the same one who had driven that wretched boy to a dishonourable death in order to avoid living a dishonoured life. There could be no doubt about it. How should she ever face Jack Ferrier again?

To her intense surprise, neither her mother nor Mabel betrayed much emotion when Mr. Devenish delivered himself of the excited inquiry as to what devil had raised the ghost of young Frank Archer. Though he had fallen back faint, shocked, exhausted, they bore the spectacle with their customary affectionate anxiety about him truly, but with no manner of amazement or curiosity expressed in their manner. They at least, Harty felt with a throb of intense relief, were innocent of the great offence of knowing or suspecting ought of the worse parts of Mr. Devenish's delinquencies. If they had been cherishing him in spite of that knowledge, Harty would have found it hard to forgive them.

"I might have been sure it was your wish," he said presently, with a snarl. "If I am to hear anything unpleasant, you're always ready to be the medium of communication; if I am to see anything disagreeable, you are always ready to play the part of show-woman. I suppose Claude Powers, with his customary good feeling, made you show me this by way of recalling happy memories of a man who was the cause of my downfall."

Harty shivered through her whole soul, and her judgment was swayed about most cruelly. Should she keep the peace for her mother's sake? or should she, for the sake of fair justice, denounce and expose the machinations, the murderous duplicity, the misrepresentations, and the false pretences of the man who hurled bitter accusations at every one else without compunction?

No; she could not do this latter thing. It was not demanded of her that she should do it. His guardian angel, as she

had called her mother on a former occasion, stood between him and vengeance now. So, picking up the locket with a gesture of tender pathos, she said:

"Claude Powers does not even know that I have it. This poor fellow's half-brother, Mr. Ferrier, was showing it to me to-day, and telling me the story of the boy's wretched death; and in the excitement of my pity and—horror—I forgot to return it to him."

"Mr. Ferrier! his half-brother! telling you the story of—of Frank Archer's death!" Mr. Devenish stammered out. And as he spoke he grew pale with the waxen, sickly pallor of a white ivy leaf, and for the first time Harty pitied him!

Really pitied him for that self-abasement of his which had ruined his life, and more than probably destroyed her happiness. "He feels that I know all about it," the girl thought. "How sorry I am that he has been unkind to me, because it must hurt him all the more, that I should know it, and how can I make him understand that I'm not scorpion enough to sting him for that?"

"Yes," she said aloud, speaking very sadly, and striving at the same time to make her eyes speak this truth to Mr. Devenish, that he need have no fear of her using her recently acquired knowledge against him, "yes; Mr. Ferrier told me the story, and I hope with all my heart that I may never hear mention made of it again."

"Amen to that," Mr. Devenish muttered, with a sigh of relief, and a shade of the livid hue crept off his face, as his spirit strengthened within him. "I knew that young fellow at a period of my life which I certainly have no particular pleasure in recalling; therefore, if you'll put that trinket out of my sight, and kindly avoid the topic, I shall really have reason to be obliged to you for once, Harty, and shall be inclined to believe that you are really not quite destitute of feeling for me."

It was an ungracious form of words, an irritatingly grudging acceptance of her generosity, but for once Harty was not irritated by him. For she had watched his eyes while he spoke, and had read in them truly that he was acting a part of distrust against, and dislike to, her now. There was gratitude, trust, admiration almost expressed in his eyes, and she realised that in this victory, which she had achieved with a struggle over her own young burning spirit, she had achieved one over his broken, and possibly contrite heart also.

"Let the dead past bury its dead," she said, reassuringly, and then she took the locket away with a good deal of solemnity in her heart and manner, and packed it up to be returned with a civil note to Jack Ferrier, a note so civil, meaningless, cool, and altogether unlike herself, that she could but feel sure it would chill him off from her effectually.

"I can never tell him the truth, I could never bear to see what he would feel when he knew it; for if Claude is compelled to be inexorable, what would Jack Ferrier be? and so I won't let him like me any longer. He'd hate himself for the weakness when he found out whom he had been liking."

So she mentally resolved to have done with Jack Ferrier's friendship for ever. For she had given her bond to Mr. Devenish that she would never betray him, never render up a secret which disclosed would surely bring down a heavier weight of obloquy on his bowed, humbled head. And she could not bear the continual constraint of being on guard against herself, of being reserved with one of the freest and frankest of her fellow-creatures—of finally feeling that he was receding from her, because he had found her out. She could not bear this, she could not bear the contemplated possibility of it. Therefore she mentally relinquished the friendship even, which was fast becoming precious to her.

The leverage power which moved her to do it, meanwhile, was fast relapsing into his normal condition. As soon, indeed, as the influence of her personal graciousness was no longer upon him, Mr. Devenish was himself again.

"I wish you would prevent that girl of yours running wild in the way she does," he said querulously to his wife, who was just prematurely congratulating herself on the turn things had taken between the belligerents; "this Mr. Ferrier who lends her his lockets, is hardly the sort of man I should choose to cast a daughter of mine adrift with."

Mrs. Devenish fidgeted meekly, and responded: "It wouldn't be just to isolate the girls as entirely as we do ourselves, Edward; surely, Mrs. Powers is—I am sure you think that Mrs. Powers is a sufficient guarantee for this young man."

"I had very much rather that Harty had nothing to do with him," Mr. Devenish said, in an exasperated tone; "if you want a reason I have none to give you, none that I choose to give you, at least; that brother of his died in a discreditable way, and if

you take my advice you'll take some steps to stop their intimacy before anything discreditable comes of it; I've no authority over Harty, I have never attempted to usurp any; but as the nominal protector of your children, I venture to offer my opinion."

He stopped breathless, having succeeded in working himself into a trembling, quivering rage, which reduced his wife to the lowest and most helpless depths of despondency. But in her despondency she dared not be silent. She knew that she must speak, or he would further goad her with accusations of being sulky.

"You know how I value your opinion, dear Edward," she said, meekly. "I will speak to Harty; I will tell her what you say about there being something discreditable——"

"In the name of common sense don't tell her anything of the sort," he interrupted, shaking his head at her. "It would be just the very way to rouse her spirit of opposition; what effect has your speaking to her had as regards putting a stop to the ridiculous exhibition she makes of herself with Mr. Powers? She'll go on and make an equally ridiculous exhibition of herself with this fellow, unless you use your authority as her mother for once in your life, and put a stop to it; speak to her, indeed!"

"I will try," Mrs. Devenish promised, meekly, and Mabel put in:

"Good feeling will make Harty give up all intercourse with both of them, I'm sure, when she knows that papa really wishes it." To which he rejoined:

"No, no, my dear; you judge her by yourself, therefore you judge her erroneously." And Mabel blushed at the praise she felt herself to be so well deserving of, and was almost melted to tears at Mr. Devenish's perfect appreciation of her.

Mrs. Devenish did "speak to her daughter" as she had promised. She did in a halting and self-condemnatory way try to put a stop to the one pleasant thing in Harty's life, her intercourse, namely, with Claude Powers and his friend.

"Give me a good reason, mamma, a reason that I can see you feel to be good, and I'll do it," the girl said, rather hopelessly.

"Edward wishes it, and he has always a good reason for his requests," the wife said.

Harty shook her head. "His wishing it isn't enough; he must tell you why he wishes it; we're not the soulless creatures he supposes us to be, mother; I must have

a reason given me for relinquishing the only happiness that comes in my way—excepting what your love gives me," the girl added, hurriedly, and Mrs. Devenish seized upon the softening mood, and strove to mould it to her husband's will at once.

"It would make him happier, Harty; that is the only reason I can give you; an all-sufficient one for me, my child." And then Mrs. Devenish went away full of all manner of exalted feelings as a wife; but owning herself to be entirely defeated as a mother. For she could not find words to combat the truthfulness that seemed to envelop Harty as the latter said:

"And an insufficient one for me, mother. And you know it."

The dull daily routine went on for about a week, during which time the girls in the house at the corner saw and heard nothing of their friends at the Court. The two young men were very much at odds in reality, but very much absorbed by each other, and pursuits that led them quite away from the Miss Carlisles in seeming. The causes whereof were these.

In the first place Claude was morbidly and vaguely jealous and angry, inclined in his heart to believe that Harty had descended to the depths of trick and lure, and that she had met Jack Ferrier rather more than half-way. While in the second place Jack Ferrier, in consequence of that note which she had written in all honesty, was misled by the idea that Harty was feigning to be coy, merely to invite him to advance the more speedily! And he loved her so well already, that the mere suspicion that this might be the case, checked, and hurt, and kept him apart from her.

And in the third place, Mrs. Powers, who was carefully watching events, was delighted to observe the drifting apart of these young people by reason of certain strong under-currents, whose source she could not determine. Delighted to observe that they were drifting apart, and not at all desirous of bringing them together again. A brace of sentiments which united in keeping her quiescent, and made her cease from sending invitations to the two girls.

But when the fates of two people are "inextricably mixed," it is useless for opposing human influence, or even for their own weak wills, to try to separate them. Without design—for each carefully avoided the other's haunt—Claude Powers found himself thrown into Harty's company one day, when there "were none others by."

He overtook her as she was struggling back from the station one afternoon, a load of newly-arrived books and newspapers in her arms, and a good deal of very newly-acquired weariness in her gait and manner. And he could not find it in his heart to pass her with merely a bow.

"Let me relieve you of your burden," he said, dismounting before she had time to protest. "Why do you do these things, Harty? Why toil down to the station and knock yourself up in this way?"

He looked thoroughly vexed for and anxious about her, and Harty's heart swelled.

"Toiling and being knocked up are experiences that I'm pretty well accustomed to by this time. No" (with a laugh), "don't think that I'm being broken down by household drudgery; but it's toil to me to get through the days here, and it's drudgery either to let things take their course or to struggle against them."

He felt very pitifully towards her, but it was "her own doing" he reflected, that things had come to this pass with her. He had no alternative. He could not concede one fraction more of his point than he had already conceded. Whereas she had it in her power to make both him and herself happy by simply breaking the imaginary fetter that bound her to her step-father. So, though he felt very pitifully towards her, he said nothing.

She read his feelings in his face, and somehow it smote her that her love for him ought to make her feel more sorry than she did, that she should be the cause of sorrow and suspense to him. At least he should have the gratification of knowing that she now knew he was right in his judgment and denunciation of Mr. Devenish. So she said in a low voice:

"I know now that you were justified in calling Mr. Devenish a scoundrel, Claude. Mr. Ferrier told me all the story of his brother the other day, and I know by what I felt for poor Mr. Ferrier what you, who know him so much better, must feel."

"I wished you not to hear it, if you remember," he said, coldly.

"Yes. I know that; but, Claude, I seemed as if I couldn't help myself when Mr. Ferrier overtook me that day. I longed to know so that I led him on——"

The phrase jarred on Claude's nerves. "Led him on," he interrupted, "that is just what I thought, what I feared you were doing, Harty. What's to be the end of it, Harty? An uncomfortable feeling at best between my old friend and me, for

he is getting fond of you, and changeable as you are——"

The words were ill-chosen; he felt that they were the instant he had uttered them, for the statement of the two facts, namely, that Jack was getting fond of her, and that she was changeable, caused Harty's face to bloom into bewitching beauty, and her eyes to flame with dangerous excitement. The sight galled him, and in spite of his conviction that his words were inexpedient, he repeated:

"And changeable as you are, you can hardly deliberately contemplate winning Jack Ferrier's heart? Can you?"

"No, not deliberately," she said, slowly. "Not deliberately. I should never do anything of that sort in cold blood."

"But you're not blind; you must see what you are doing. I held my peace while I thought you were putting forth your winning power unconsciously; but now it is time to speak when I see you and Jack Ferrier on such terms that for the sake of proffering him your sympathy you go directly adverse to my wishes. Good Heavens!" he continued, working himself into a hotter jealous rage with each word he spoke, "is it possible that it is true what you told me, that you had only been true to me all these years because no one had tempted you to be false?"

"I think there was a great deal of truth in it, Claude. I know many girls would have flattered you by implying that numbers of men had been sighing in vain for them during your absence; but I think that would have been a meaner thing to do than to tell you the truth as I have done."

He chafed in silence for a few moments. He had done mischief he felt. The girl would not be scolded, would not be curbed, would not be put into any groove that pleased him, and made to run in it. A fierce pang shot through his heart as he thought, "Am I losing her love!"

"I have loved you a good many years, darling," he said presently. "Ferrier's is only a matter of yesterday in comparison with mine."

She moved her head uneasily in a melancholy, deprecating way, and looked up at him with her candid clear eyes.

"Why do you keep on speaking of his liking for me, Claude? Why do you do it? I know myself—I know that I shall go on thinking about it. I know that if I do ever see him again I shall be more than I have ever been to him before, because I do so like to be liked——"

"I know that you will drive me mad,"

he interrupted, almost groaning; and the tears flashed into her eyes as she answered:

"Oh, Claude, what a pity we ever met again!"

"Not if you'll continue to be what I believe you always have been, faithful and brave," he exclaimed, eagerly. "Let us marry and go abroad, darling."

"I should like it, but I can't," she said, simply. "I can't do it, Claude; it's no use."

"Your love for me is waning," he said, jealously.

"Do you think it is?" she asked, dubiously. "Isn't it possible to care very much for some one else, and still to be fondest of you? If it isn't possible, hearts are narrower things than I hoped they were."

"I should consider any woman's heart too capacious if it had room for another besides myself," he said, in quiet, miserable accents. "Harty, do you know we are talking in a way that is very horrible to me? Give me, after it all, one scrap of comfort; tell me that you would feel no pain if you believed that you would never see Jack Ferrier again."

Her heart began to beat more rapidly. Was it possible that Jack Ferrier was gone already? was it possible that her chilling note had so effectually chilled him, that he had gone away without making further effort to see her? There was genuine sharp pain to her in the possibility, and she could not conceal it.

"Oh, Claude," she exclaimed, "I shall see him again, shan't I? I mean he isn't gone, is he?"

"It would hurt you, then, if he were," he said, bitterly; "it would hurt either your heart or your vanity; which is it, Harty? Is it a love of mere flirtation, or is it anything deeper?"

"I don't know which it is yet. Is he gone?"

"You ask that again, though you see how the question cuts me. Well, as you will have it, you shall. No, he is not gone; would to Heaven he were."

She heaved a sigh of relief.

"You can't control a sign of delight," he muttered, in a paroxysm of mortification and love. "You don't take the trouble to try and hide from me that you are glad that he is here still."

"It would be deceitful to pretend to be

any other than I am, and that's glad," she said, steadily; "but, Claude, look here; I haven't seen him for a week. Has he taken a dislike to me? does he know that I am connected with the man who ruined his brother's life?"

She asked it with pitiable eagerness, poor child, and her eagerness goaded him into making a cruel retort.

"He does not know it yet; when he does he'll break the spell you have cast over him quickly enough. And he won't think the better of you for having reserved your part of the story, when he made a full confidence of his portion of it. You're only preparing misery and mortification for yourself, Harty, by this course you're pursuing."

"What am I doing?" she struck in. "I don't seek him, or try to lure him to come after me. I haven't seen him for a week. What have I done that you're so angry with me, Claude?"

"Changed to me," he answered, with a choking sensation in his throat. "Let yourself feel such an interest in him as no man can tolerate the woman he loves feeling for another man. Harty, I make every allowance for you, for your excitable, changeable nature, but other people will not be so lenient, and, by Heaven, I'll never hear my wife dubbed a flirt."

She came to a stand-still in an instant, her lips quivering, her whole face working with emotion.

"What have I done?" she reiterated. "I have done nothing to deserve this yet; if I were what you mean by a flirt, I could have done all that I have done, and much more too, without you're being a bit the wiser for it. But I have told you the worst of myself, and you scold me for it."

"You don't know what it is to feel that the one thing you love best in life is slipping away from you," he pleaded.

"Do you think I am slipping away from you, Claude?" she asked, wistfully. "No, no; don't think that; but it's all so unsatisfactory between us. We stand upon shifting sands, don't we? I can't help liking to look away from the danger and uncertainty sometimes—"

"Well met," a hearty clear voice shouted out, and Jack Ferrier dropped over the hedge into the road a few yards ahead of them.